

*The Poetics of Ekphrasis: A Stylistic Approach* Marie-Eirini Panagiotidou. West Chester: Springer International Publishing, 2022. 267pp. ISBN: 978-3-031-11312-3

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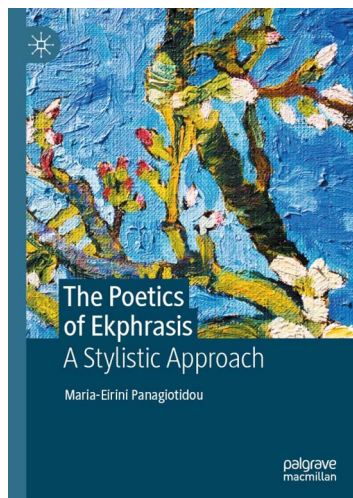
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*The Poetics of Ekphrasis: A Stylistic Approach* is a collection of six chapters that seek to explore different modalities and the evolution of ekphrasis in different contexts. This concept, originally defined as “the literary representation of art”, has gradually evolved throughout history and has led to the expansion of such a term in an outstanding range of scholarly interest. The term has been, and still is, used to refer to the interaction between the various arts. Nonetheless, in recent years, contemporary ekphrastic practices have subverted the traditional relation of the representational visual text to its verbal representation, to the point of discontinuity (Clüver 2017, 30).

This book offers a detailed analysis of the language processes involved in transforming works of art into literary objects. It provides a comprehensive understanding of ekphrastic poetry from both a stylistic and cognitive perspective. The author explores the mechanics of ekphrasis in written form, as well as the cognitive and psychological impact of reading ekphrastic poems. They establish an analytical framework based on four key principles of ekphrasis: representation, narrativization,

transposition, and collaboration. *The Poetics of Ekphrasis A Stylistic Approach* is a compilation of six chapters that dwell on ekphrasis from various contexts. Those chapters are structured around six thematic parts: “Ekphrasis: Past and Present”, “Ekphrastic Qualities and Ekphrastic Agents”, “Representation and Narrativization in Ekphrasis”, “Transposition: Cognitive Facets of Ekphrastic Experience” and “Collaborative Ekphrasis: Multimodal Interplay”. Each section is connected theoretically and builds up on the others, fully exploring the different implications and intricacies of ekphrasis in a broad variety of contexts. Both the introduction and the conclusions are written each by the editor of this book, giving the rounded feeling of circular journey, as the reader accompanies the different authors in a comprehensive journey on the ekphrastic experience. The first section “Ekphrasis: Past and Present” describes the history of ekphrasis over the centuries, tracing its rich history.

The book provides the arguments of the greatest exponents of the aesthetic paragone, such as Leonardo Da Vinci, who claimed the elevation and superposition of painting to the level of poetry. The other side of the coin is embodied by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing who voiced his opposition to the *ut pictura poesis* view and accentuated the opposition between poetry. Lessing considered that these two mediums belonged to a different semiotic system and nature; in other words, poetry is a temporal art and painting is a spatial one (2005, 50). Consequently, the concept was reformulated by critics such as Ruth Webb and Leo Spitzer, and this latter was the first critic to define ekphrasis as a poetic genre and separated from the realm of rhetoric (Panagiotidou 2022, 24-25).

The first section, “Introduction,” opens with Maria-Eirini Panagiotidou’s reflection on the main motivations and aims that led her to write this volume. Panagiotidou argues that one of the main features of ekphrasis is its relationship between the visual and the verbal. Furthermore, she adds that ekphrasis is situated within the field of intermediality (2-3) and is in line with Ellström and Rippl’s arguments on intermediality and multimodality. Ekphrasis is related to intermediality in that it explores the interaction between various media and art forms. On the other hand, multimodality encompasses all forms of media and combines elements from various modes (Panagiotidou 2022, 7-8).

The second chapter of this volume aims to provide a historical overview of ekphrasis from both ancient and modern perspectives. Although the author is aware that the term originated in Ancient Greece, it has been gradually reformulated over the course of centuries. According to Panagiotidou, *enargeia* has the ability to engage and captivate an audience, transforming them from passive listeners to active observers. It is widely recognized as one of the most influential tools of persuasion. The skilful use of language in *enargeia* creates a vivid portrayal of life and constructs illusions that engage the audience,

making them feel as if they are actively participating in the described events. In modern scholarly discussions of ekphrasis, the primary focus is on the poetic representation of both real and fictional art.

The following chapter discusses the reconfiguration and new definition of ekphrasis. Panagiotidou establishes such reconceptualization across different fields of study and genres. The definition offered by Heffernan explains that ekphrasis is “the verbal representation of a visual representation” (Heffernan 1993, 3). Since taking this definition as a paradigm ekphrasis also includes different agents in the process of meaning-creation. This chapter also establishes a sense of connection with previous categorizations of ekphrasis. She starts with John Hollander’s dichotomy between actual and notional ekphrasis based on whether the work of art is real and identifiable or fictional and imaginary. Consequently, the ekphrastic experience in relation to the medium will be different since the reader will be viewed as a spectator participant or an ekphrastic spectator (Benton 2000, 23)

On the other hand, Panagiotidou offers Robillard’s typology of ekphrasis, which distinguishes between the “scalar model” and “differential model” (2022, 52). The “scalar model” contains six points that gauge the presence of ekphrasis in a text. These points include communicativeness, referentiality, structurality, selectivity, dialogicity, and autoreflexivity. Conversely, the “differential model” is used to quantify a text’s ekphrastic nature using a rate fluctuating from explicitly marked ekphrastic texts to texts that contain only loose pictorial associations. Robillard identifies three categories: depictive, attributive, and associative. All of them share the similarity that they have to do with the degrees of ekphrasis and its source (Panagiotidou 2022, 53). The important section of this chapter is the one focused on Panagiotidou’s typology concerning ekphrastic qualities. She distinguishes four qualities that lead to the emergence of ekphrastic responses: representation, narrativization, transposition, and collaboration (2022, 58). The quality of representations aims to recognize the inherent representational nature of ekphrastic texts. The quality of narrativization, on the other hand, acknowledges the strong ekphrastic impulse to situate the artwork within the context of a longer narrative. The concept of transposition refers to the methods used to engage readers in the ekphrastic experience and allow them to immerse themselves in the interconnected worlds of the verbal and the visual. The fourth and final quality, collaboration, emphasizes the intermedial and multimodal nature of ekphrastic poems and the symbiotic relationship between the verbal and visual mediums. It also acknowledges the collaborative relationship between the author, the text, the artwork, and the reader.

The fourth chapter offers a deeper insight into the first two qualities of ekphrasis, more specifically, narrativization and representation as well as how

stylistics, narratology, and cognitive poetics can provide useful tools for studying ekphrastic effects. Ekphrastic representation and narrative are often viewed as in opposition, with some critics arguing that ekphrasis only provides ornamental details without advancing the plot. Taking representation and narrative into account as qualities allows us to explore them not as antagonistic forces but as different parameters of ekphrasis that manifest in different degrees inside a text. Panagiotidou argues that conceptualizing both terms as qualities allows the reader to explore them as different parameters of ekphrasis that manifest to different degrees within a text (2022, 85). Representations according to numerous critics, including Panagiotidou herself, associate the ekphrastic representation with mimesis. Nonetheless, emphasizing mimesis might lead to a narrower conceptualization of ekphrasis that focuses on resemblance (2022, 86).

Conversely, narrativization following Heffernan's arguments, ekphrasis should not be solely associated with either narration or description. This would allow us to consider ekphrasis as a hybrid form that may contain prototypical elements from each category. Panagiotidou proposes the concept of narrativization to refer to the construction and delivery of a story through ekphrasis. Therefore narrativization is not seen as opposed to representation, and both qualities can co-occur in a text to varying degrees. Some texts may have a stronger representational quality, while others may emphasize the construction of a narrative. Variation can be observed within a single text, with some sections privileging narrative and others prioritizing description.

Last, but no means least, the fifth part is called "Transposition: Cognitive Facets of the Ekphrastic Experience" and it explores the transpositional nature of ekphrastic poetry, which allows readers to fully immerse themselves in the world of the poem. The concept of transposition is defined in relation to ekphrasis and its connection to embodiment. The second part of the chapter focuses on iconicity as a means of entering the fictional world of the poem in an iconic manner. Examples of morphosyntactic, phonological, and graphological iconicity in ekphrastic poems are provided to demonstrate how the reader is invited to explore the connections between the visual and the verbal and to engage with a virtual gallery.

The sixth chapter of this study delves into the final aspect of ekphrasis, namely collaboration. The examination begins by exploring the interplay between word and image from the perspective of intermediality. Subsequently, the focus shifts to the quality of collaboration and its scalar characteristics. In the realm of ekphrastic poetry, the relationship between word and image exists on a continuum, ranging from mere allusions to complete integration. The chapter proceeds to investigate this complete integration in greater depth, employing an analysis of Jennifer Sperry Steinorth's graphic poem, "Her Read: A Graphic

Poem.” Graphic poems deliberately merge images and words to create immersive, multimodal experiences that challenge the notion of a paragon relationship between words and images. Instead, these texts prioritize fruitful collaboration, as exemplified by Steinorth’s work, which combines various semiotic modes to depict the journey of the female voice from oppression to liberation. Drawing on concepts from multimodal stylistics, cognitive poetics, and semiotics, the analysis examines how text, image, typography, and graphic elements intertwine to represent the woman’s struggle and triumph, thereby reinforcing the dialogic and symbiotic relationship between words and images. This chapter aims to thoroughly explore these interrelations by introducing collaboration as the fourth property of ekphrasis. In this context, collaboration extends beyond the interactions between the author, text, artwork, and reader discussed in Chapter 2, to encompass the interconnectedness of ekphrastic poems and artworks, as well as other multimodal elements.

The final and closing chapter in this volume provides a summary of the primary findings of this study and suggests potential avenues for future research. By employing stylistic methodologies, Panagiotidou has identified and examined the key characteristics of ekphrasis, focusing not only on the textual expressions of this phenomenon but also on the reader’s interaction with the literary text and the artwork it references. Furthermore, she has taken into consideration the intermedial and multimodal aspects of ekphrasis.

All in all, *The Poetics of Ekphrasis: A Stylistic Approach* offers a strong and complete study of different modalities of ekphrasis in a variety of approaches. It also includes a novel method for analyzing ekphrastic poetry by utilizing frameworks established in the field of stylistics. By employing stylistic methodologies, Panagioutidou identifies and examines the key characteristics of ekphrasis, focusing not only on the textual expressions of this phenomenon but also on the reader’s interaction with the literary text and the artwork it references.

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